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Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force for the period from 3 March to 28 May 2015

I. Introduction

1. The present report gives an account of the activities of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) during the past three months, pursuant to the mandate contained in Security Council resolution 350 (1974) and extended by subsequent resolutions, most recently resolution 2192 (2014).

II. Situation in the area and activities of the Force

2. During the reporting period, the ceasefire between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic generally was maintained, albeit in a continuously volatile environment attributable to the ongoing conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic and despite a number of significant violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement of 1974, which are set out below. The Syrian armed forces carried out military activities and security operations against armed groups, often in response to offensives carried out by the armed groups in the area of separation and area of limitation on the Bravo side. Inside the area of separation, the presence of the Syrian armed forces and military equipment, as well as any other armed personnel and military equipment other than that of UNDOF, is in violation of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement. As underscored by the Security Council in its resolution 2192 (2014), there should be no military activity of any kind in the area of separation.

3. A number of significant incidents occurred across the ceasefire line in violation of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement. On 3 March, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) informed UNDOF that an IDF soldier, located in the area of limitation west of New Hamidiyeh, had been lightly injured as a result of fire originating from the Bravo side. On 24 April, UNDOF observed an IDF missile launching unit deployed in the 10 km zone of the area of limitation, approximately 5 km north-west of Camp Ziouani, and four missiles being fired, one of which was observed crossing the Alpha line. The point of impact could not be observed. The deployment of this system and the subsequent firing of missiles constitute a violation of the 1974 Disengagement Agreement. On 26 April, United Nations observation post 73 heard three explosions in the vicinity of an IDF position located west of the observation post and subsequently observed smoke west of the position

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and IDF air activity west of the Alpha line. Shortly thereafter, IDF informed UNDOF that they had killed four "terrorists" carrying "heavy equipment" who had crossed the Alpha line from an eastern direction as they approached an IDF position approximately 500 m north-west of observation post 73. The following day, UNDOF initiated an investigation into the incident. Because the area was heavily mined, it took the UNDOF explosive ordnance disposal team until the afternoon of 28 April to reach the site, where they saw three bodies at two locations approximately 10-15 m apart. In the evening of the same day, IDF permitted a group of 10 civilians from the Bravo side to remove the bodies from the incident site. IDF gave UNDOF only until midday of the following day to conduct its investigation. On the morning of 29 April, the UNDOF explosive ordnance disposal team restarted its clearance activities in order to allow UNDOF to proceed with the investigation. Notwithstanding objections from UNDOF, when the deadline approached, IDF destroyed the two bags at the site in which IDF had claimed that the four individuals had carried explosives. Owing to the IDF deadline, UNDOF was unable to complete its investigation and cannot confirm the IDF claims that the individuals intended to place improvised explosive devices.

4. Between 27 April and 5 May, several incidents involving mortars, heavy machine guns, anti-aircraft machine guns and small arms spillover from the Bravo to the Alpha side occurred during intense fighting between armed groups that centred on the area of Al Qahtaniyah and its surroundings in the central part of the area of separation. IDF did not retaliate to the spillover incidents with the exception of the one that occurred on 30 April, when UNDOF observed two tank rounds being fired from an area just south-east of Camp Ziouani on the Alpha side towards Al Qahtaniyah in the area of separation. The points of impact were not observed. At the same time, a tank was observed moving between two IDF positions.

5. Crossing of the ceasefire line by civilians, primarily shepherds, was observed by United Nations personnel on an almost daily basis. On 19 May, United Nations personnel at observation post 51 observed three individuals from the Bravo side in a vehicle crossing the Alpha line. They collected about 50 mines, after which they left the location. On 28 April, United Nations personnel at observation post 54 observed one wounded person being handed over from the Bravo side to the Alpha side. On 5 May, United Nations personnel at the same observation post observed two men being transported from an easterly direction on the Bravo side to a gate in the Israeli technical fence north of their location. The vehicles subsequently left the location without the two men. On 17 May, United Nations personnel at observation post 54 observed one wounded person on a stretcher being brought from the Bravo side and left in the vicinity of the Israeli technical fence. IDF was not observed to be present at the time. On 19 May, United Nations personnel at the same location observed one wounded person being handed over by individuals from the Bravo to the Alpha side; later that evening, two persons on stretchers were transferred from the Alpha to the Bravo side.

6. In employing its best efforts to maintain the ceasefire and see that it is scrupulously observed, as prescribed by the Disengagement of Forces Agreement, UNDOF reports all breaches of the ceasefire line. UNDOF protested all firing across the ceasefire line to the Senior Syrian Arab Delegate and IDF. All incidents of firing into the area of separation and across the ceasefire line, as well as the crossing by individuals of the ceasefire line, are violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement. In his regular interactions with both sides, the Force Commander called

on both parties to use utmost restraint to prevent incidents along or across the ceasefire line from further escalating the security situation.

7. UNDOF observed and reported a number of instances of transborder movements of unidentified individuals, including, on one occasion, women and children, between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic in the northern part of the area of separation.

8. In the context of the Syrian conflict, the areas of Hadar and Arneh in the northern part of the area of operation remained relatively quiet, though tensions involving the communities in Jabbata, Trunje and Ufaniyah in the area of separation as well as in Bayt Jinn, Mazra'at Bayt Jinn and Mughur al-Mir in the area of limitation remained. Residents of Hadar built trenches along routes leading to the area of the village. Syrian armed forces occasionally targeted the Jabbata-Trunja-Ufaniyah area with direct and indirect fire. The offensive of the Syrian armed forces in the central part of the area of limitation, which started in February, has stalled since March; the front line between the Syrian armed forces and armed groups currently runs between Mashara, Kafr Nasij and Kafr Shams. Between 5 and 7 April, armed groups carried out small-scale attacks in the area around Camp Faouar, in the vicinity of which the Syrian armed forces have deployed artillery guns and armoured vehicles. An attack on 14 April by armed groups on Tal al-Kurum, the location of United Nations observation post 56 as well as a Syrian armed forces position, was repelled by the Syrian armed forces. On several occasions, the Syrian armed forces targeted the central and southern parts of the area of limitation with air strikes and artillery fire without changing the overall disposition of forces. During the reporting period, UNDOF observed air strikes by Syrian armed forces planes in the general areas around Mashara, Tal al-Mal, Tal al-Harrah, Namar, Ankhul, Ain Zeiwan and Jaseem in the central and southern parts of the area of limitation. On 10 March, four air strikes were observed in the vicinity of Tal al-Garbi, two of which impacted in the area of separation.

9. Between 27 April and 5 May, heavy fighting took place among rival armed groups in the central part of the area of separation, in close proximity to the ceasefire line. Although the United Nations does not have the means to verify reports independently, several sources indicated that the clashes erupted when a coalition of armed groups, including the Al-Nusra Front, a listed terrorist organization, and Ahrar al-Sham, as well as some elements aligned with the Southern Front coalition, attacked positions of the newly formed armed group Jaysh al-Jihad in the area of Al Qahtaniyah and Quneitra. According to statements released by the groups, the motives for the attack were the links of Jaysh al-Jihad to the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria group and its refusal to recognize the legitimacy of rulings by a religious court. UNDOF observed that the fighting had subsided by 5 May, coinciding with reports that the coalition of armed groups had taken over the positions of Jaysh al-Jihad. During this period of fighting between the armed groups, Syrian armed forces re-established control over Al Samdaniyah, in the central part of the area of separation, south of Al Baath, and occasionally targeted exposed high-value assets of the armed groups, destroying at least one tank. Since 5 May, UNDOF has observed occasional fighting between rival armed groups in the southern parts of the areas of separation and limitation. According to open sources, friction is growing between the Al-Nusra Front and the Yarmouk Martyrs Brigade, which issued statements in support of Jaysh al-Jihad. The Yarmouk Martyrs Brigade had kidnapped and detained UNDOF peacekeepers in the area of separation on two

occasions in early 2013, while the Al-Nusra Front had kidnapped and detained 45 UNDOF peacekeepers between 28 August and 11 September 2014.

10. The spillover fire resulting from the fighting around Al Qahtaniyah impacted in and around United Nations observation post 51 and Camp Ziouani, jeopardizing United Nations personnel and facilities. Owing to the significant deterioration in the security situation, United Nations personnel at both locations spent periods of time in the shelter. In the afternoon of 1 May, two United Nations military observers serving with Observer Group Golan sustained minor injuries from shrapnel from an airburst close to United Nations observation post 51. As the exchanges of fire intensified on 3 May in close proximity to United Nations observation post 51, UNDOF temporarily withdrew the military observers from the post. On 4 May, heavy exchanges of fire continued with spillover fire impacting in and around Camp Ziouani on several occasions. Two UNDOF military personnel were injured by shrapnel while in their prefabricated office building in the rear part of the camp. One officer sustained wounds to the chest and the other received minor injuries to the face. All four injured United Nations personnel were taken to Zefat hospital and have since been released in good condition. Additionally, a United Nations peacekeeper was hit by a stray bullet that ricocheted off his chest, his fragmentation vest protecting him from injury. Three UNDOF vehicles sustained minor damage. On 29 April, one UNDOF vehicle in the scrapyard of the camp caught fire after being hit by a stray bullet. After the fighting had subsided, UNDOF carried out an inspection of United Nations observation post 51. The post withstood four explosive impacts and at least four smaller calibre direct fire impacts. It was clear of unexploded ordnance and reoccupied by Observer Group Golan military observers on 6 May.

11. During the heavy fighting in the central part of the area of separation, UNDOF observed, on 2 May, a white armoured personnel carrier of the type used by UNDOF. On 5 May, UNDOF observed an armoured personnel carrier of the same type moving from Quneitra towards Al Baath. No United Nations markings were visible on either vehicle.

12. During the reporting period, the Syrian armed forces maintained their positions in the area of separation and reinforced their presence around the urban centres of Al Baath and Khan Arnabeh and its southern approaches, as well as in the area of Al Wisiyah in the area of limitation along the main road connecting Quneitra to Damascus, with additional tanks, armoured vehicles and artillery weapons. The Syrian armed forces generally deployed five tanks in the area of separation, including at their position at Tal al-Kurum, and several others at locations immediately adjacent. On various occasions, and particularly during the fighting between 27 April and 5 May, UNDOF observed three to four tanks in the area of separation that were controlled by armed groups. On 12 May, UNDOF observed an unidentified person present in observation post 52.

13. UNDOF protested the presence of Syrian armed forces and equipment in the area of separation and the firing into and inside the area of separation. The Force Commander reiterated to the Syrian authorities the obligation of the Syrian armed forces to halt military operations in the area of separation and to cease firing from the area of limitation, stressing the importance of abiding by the terms of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement and ensuring the safety and security of United Nations personnel on the ground. Senior United Nations officials have conveyed

similar messages to the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations.

14. During the reporting period, UNDOF observed up to six different locations where tents had been set up for internally displaced persons in the area of separation. UNDOF observed around 70 tents north-west of Al Aishah village, straddling the ceasefire line. In the village of Kudnaa in the area of limitation, between three and seven tents were observed. Another five tents were seen in an area along the ceasefire line opposite the village of Braika. Further south, between 10 and 15 tents were observed at a location straddling the Bravo line north-west of the village of Ain Kadi. On various occasions, UNDOF observed civilians, including women and children, going about their regular daily activities in the tented camps. In mid-May, three tents were observed for a few days a short distance north of United Nations outpost 85A, with women seen moving in the vicinity. Owing to the closure of the established crossing between the Alpha and Bravo sides since late August, UNDOF is not currently in a position to facilitate, in cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross, humanitarian crossings, including for students, between the Alpha and the Bravo sides.

15. In its current configuration, UNDOF has continued to carry out its mandate by maintaining visibility, albeit limited, of the area of separation and the ceasefire line from a number of positions it continues to hold in the area of separation. The Force continued to maintain four positions on Mount Hermon in the northern part of the area of separation and position 80 in the southern part as well as position 22 on the Alpha side. The winter season, which had restricted movement, having ended, UNDOF conducts daily foot and vehicle patrols on Mount Hermon. UNDOF operations continued to be supported by the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) military observers in Observer Group Golan, who maintained five fixed and four temporary observation posts on the Alpha side. The focus of activities of Observer Group Golan remained on around-the-clock static observation, investigations and situational analysis. Through Observer Group Golan, UNDOF continued to carry out fortnightly inspections of equipment and force levels in the area of limitation on the Alpha side. Liaison officers from the Alpha side accompanied Observer Group Golan inspection teams. Inspections and mobile operations in the area of limitation on the Bravo side remained suspended because of the security situation. As in the past, the Force faced restrictions on freedom of movement and its inspection teams were denied access to some positions on the Alpha side. During the reporting period, on five occasions, UNDOF observed an IDF-deployed missile launching unit at various locations on the Alpha side within 10 km of the ceasefire line, in addition to the intermittent presence of 155 mm artillery guns. On 15 May, UNDOF observed an Iron Dome anti-missile unit deployed in the 10 km zone of the area of limitation on the Alpha side; the unit remained at the location at the time of reporting. Observer Group Golan members continued to experience restrictions of movement on the Alpha side when entering and exiting United Nations observation post 73, which is located east of the Israeli technical fence and access to which has been further reduced to twice per week. UNDOF peacekeepers remained deployed at observation posts 54 and 73 to enhance protection of the military observers.

16. Since the temporary relocation of UNDOF from a number of its positions on the Bravo side in September 2014, UNDOF, in consultation with the parties, continued to review the situation in the area of separation. The ultimate goal of

UNDOF is to return fully to the area of separation when the situation permits. In this connection, UNDOF assessed that the prevailing security situation in the area of separation was not currently conducive to such a return. Basing its planning on prevailing security developments in the area of separation and area of limitation on the Bravo side and also taking into consideration the financial and personnel resources required, the mission considers a phased return of the Force to the area of separation to be the most feasible approach, conditions permitting.

17. In the meantime, UNDOF continued to engage the parties on practical arrangements to be put in place to establish an interim configuration of the Force that would allow it to continue to maintain the ceasefire, continue to monitor, verify and report on violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement and exercise its critical liaison functions with the parties in order to implement its mandate until the Force can return fully to the area of separation. Discussions with both parties continue with respect to agreeing on procedures for UNDOF personnel crossing between the Alpha and the Bravo sides in the absence of the established crossing at Quneitra. UNDOF also continues to engage with the parties on the use of technology to offset the loss of situational awareness in the area of separation. In addition, discussions with the Alpha side continue with respect to additional locations required to establish temporary United Nations positions for observing the ceasefire line from the Alpha side.

18. UNDOF continues to resupply its positions on Mt. Hermon from Damascus. UNDOF convoys between Damascus and the Mount Hermon positions are conducted on an almost daily basis in armoured vehicles and with an UNDOF security escort. In an effort to enhance the Force's ability to sustain the Mount Hermon positions, the mission is exploring, in consultation with the Syrian authorities, the possibility of strengthening its presence at position 12 and establishing a forward operating base in the area of limitation on the Bravo side.

19. UNDOF continued to carry out contingency planning for the reinforcement and evacuation of United Nations positions and observation posts. UNDOF, through its Force reserve company, also conducted regular exercises and training. The company remains at two UNDOF locations, Camp Ziouani and position 80.

20. The implementation of risk mitigation measures at positions, Camp Ziouani and the temporary headquarters in Damascus also continued. Additional sand-filled gabions were placed at observation posts 54 and 73 as additional protection to the existing infrastructure. Similarly, gabions were placed as additional protective measures for various locations at position 80, where the mission also added a protected post along the perimeter wall. In Camp Ziouani, among other measures, a number of T-walls were set up to protect exposed buildings and offices from stray fire coming from the area of separation. During the period of intense fighting in the vicinity of Al Qahtaniyah in close proximity to Camp Ziouani, as a precautionary security measure, on 28 and 29 April as well as on 1 and 4 May, United Nations national and non-essential international staff were instructed to leave Camp Ziouani and on 5 May advised not to come to the camp. Movement of UNDOF personnel on the Bravo side remains limited.

21. As at 20 May, UNDOF comprised 788 troops, including 31 women, from Fiji (299), India (191), Ireland (138), Nepal (158) and the Netherlands (2). In addition, 67 military observers from UNTSO, including 2 women, assisted the Force in carrying out its tasks. In December 2014 and in April this year, seven United

Nations personnel based in Damascus — six UNDOF and one UNTSO personnel — were declared "unwelcome" in Syria by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic.

III. Financial aspects

22. By its resolution 68/260 B of 30 June 2014, the General Assembly appropriated the amount of $64.1 million for the maintenance of the Force for the period from 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015.

23. As at 18 May 2015, unpaid assessed contributions to the UNDOF Special Account amounted to $22.2 million. Total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations at the same date amounted to $1,999.2 million.

24. As at 18 May 2015, amounts owed to contributors for troop costs totalled $3 million. Reimbursements for troop costs and for equipment and self-sustainment have been made for the period up to 31 January 2015 and 31 December 2014 respectively, in accordance with the quarterly payment schedule.

IV. Implementation of Security Council resolution 338 (1973)

25. The Security Council, when deciding in its resolution 2192 (2014) to renew the mandate of UNDOF for a further period of six months, until 30 June 2015, called upon the parties concerned to immediately implement its resolution 338 (1973) and requested the Secretary-General to submit, at the end of the period, a report on developments in the situation and the measures taken to implement that resolution. The search for a peaceful settlement in the Middle East, in particular the efforts made at various levels to implement resolution 338 (1973), was dealt with in my report on the situation in the Middle East (A/69/341), submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 69/24 on Jerusalem and 69/25 on the Syrian Golan.

26. Since the discontinuation of indirect peace talks in December 2008, there have been no negotiations between the parties. The Syrian conflict is further reducing the prospects for their resumption and progress towards peace between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic. I look forward to a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Syria and the resumption of efforts towards a comprehensive, just and durable peace settlement, as called for by the Security Council in its resolution 338 (1973) and other relevant resolutions.

V. Observations

27. I note with concern the serious violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement that have taken place. The firing from the Bravo side across the ceasefire line as well as IDF artillery fire and air strikes jeopardize the long-term ceasefire between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic. The incident of 26 April across the ceasefire line is of deep concern. It is important for the parties to cooperate fully with UNDOF in the event of incidents and allow the Force to conduct the necessary investigations. It remains critical that both sides maintain liaison with UNDOF in the first instance to prevent any escalation of the situation across the ceasefire line. The mandate of UNDOF remains an important element in ensuring the stability of

the region. For its part, the United Nations will spare no effort in ensuring that the long-held ceasefire between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic continues to hold.

28. I remain deeply concerned about the continuing deterioration of the security situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, its impact on the Syrian population and its potential implications for the stability of the region. These developments have continued to affect the UNDOF area of operation significantly. The presence of the Syrian armed forces and unauthorized military equipment in the area of separation are grave violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement. The increased use of heavy weapons by both the Syrian armed forces and armed groups in the continuing Syrian conflict, including the use of air power by government forces in the area of limitation on the Bravo side, is disturbing. Armed opposition groups and other armed groups continue to maintain control over significant sections of the areas of separation and limitation in the southern part of the UNDOF area of operation and remain present along the section of the main road connecting the two UNDOF camps. The established crossing between the Alpha and the Bravo sides remains closed.

29. There should be no military forces in the area of separation other than those of UNDOF. I note with concern the increasing presence and use of tanks and heavy weapons by the Syrian armed forces and, in increasing number, by the armed groups in the area of separation. I call upon all parties to take all measures necessary to protect civilians. I also urge the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to stop the use of air strikes. I call upon all parties to the Syrian conflict to cease military actions throughout the country, including in the UNDOF area of operations, and remove all military equipment, Syrian armed forces personnel and armed personnel from the area of separation. I call on countries with influence to strongly and urgently convey to the armed groups in the UNDOF area of operation the need to cease any actions in violation of the Disengagement Agreement between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic that jeopardize the safety and security of United Nations personnel and to accord United Nations personnel the freedom to carry out their mandate safely and securely. Any hostile act against United Nations personnel, including threatening their physical safety, restricting their movement and direct and indirect firing at United Nations personnel and facilities by anyone, is unacceptable. I reiterate that all military activities in the area of separation conducted by any actor pose a risk to the ceasefire and to the local civilian population, in addition to the United Nations personnel on the ground.

30. The primary responsibility for the safety and security of United Nations personnel in the areas of separation and limitation on the Bravo side rests with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic. I am deeply concerned that during the reporting period four United Nations peacekeepers were injured as a result of the ongoing Syrian conflict. The safety and security of United Nations personnel must be ensured.

31. Both Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic have stated their continued commitment to the Disengagement of Forces Agreement and the presence of UNDOF. I call on both parties to actively assist UNDOF in achieving its interim configuration in structure and deployment as quickly as possible to ensure that the mission is in a position to effectively implement its mandate, until such time as the security situation allows the Force to return fully to the area of separation. I note the assistance provided by the Governments of Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic in

facilitating the provision of essential supplies in support of the Force. The full return of UNDOF to the area of separation remains a priority for the mission. In planning and preparing for this full return, the safety and security of United Nations personnel will be the primary consideration in determining the exact modalities.

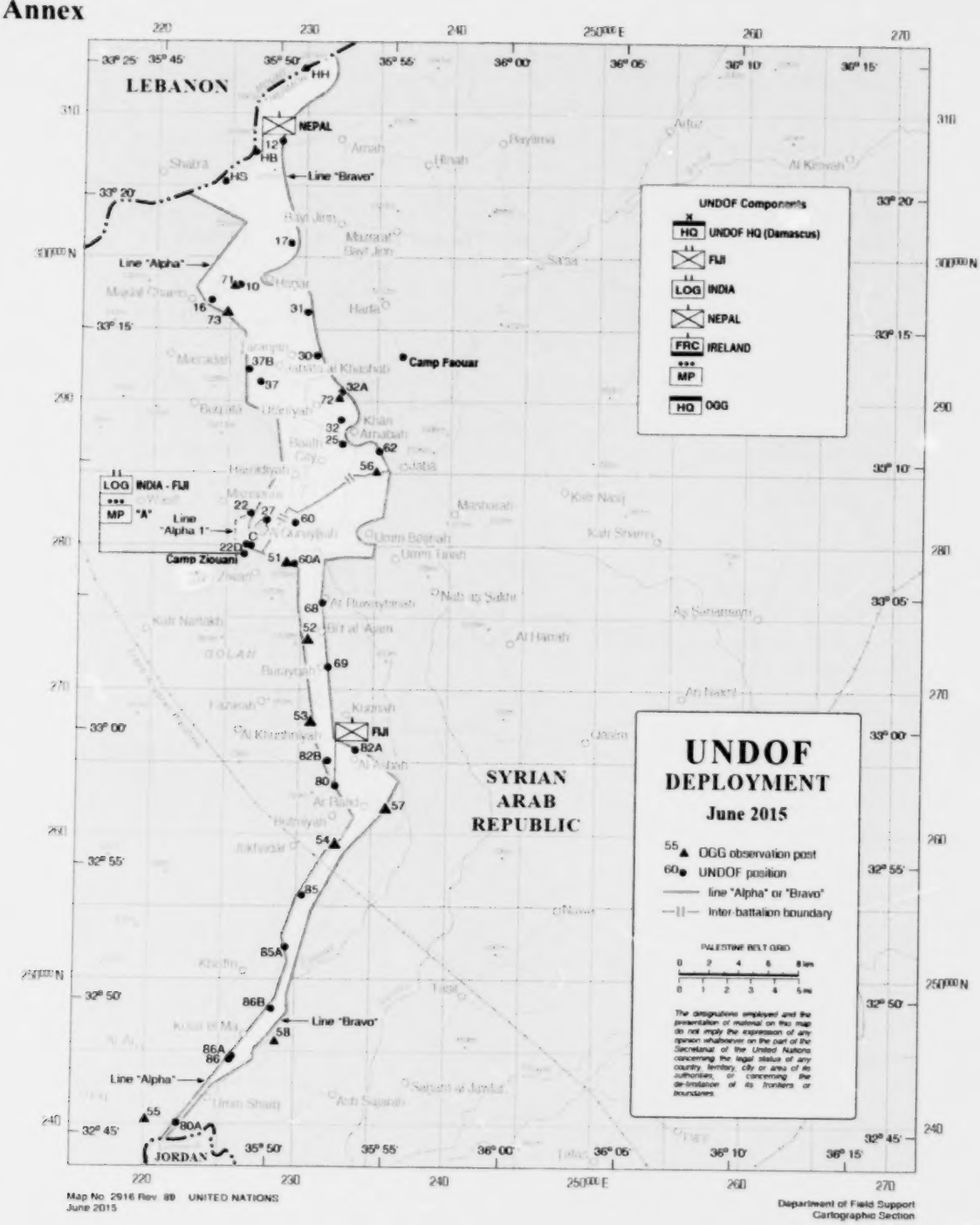
32. It is equally critical that the Security Council continue to bring its influence to bear on the parties concerned to ensure that UNDOF is accorded the ability to operate freely. It is essential that UNDOF continue to have at its disposal all necessary means and resources that will allow it to return fully to the area of separation as the situation permits. In this regard, I note the negative impact that expulsions of UNDOF personnel by the host Government have on UNDOF operations and remind the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic of its obligations under the Charter of the United Nations and the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations of 1946.

33. The confidence and commitment of troop-contributing countries in UNDOF remain key factors for the mission's ability to continue to carry out its mandate. I am grateful to the Governments of Fiji, India, Ireland, Nepal and the Netherlands for their contributions to UNDOF and for staying the course under these continuously trying circumstances. In addition, I am grateful to the Member States that contribute military observers to UNTSO.

34. Under the prevailing circumstances, I consider the continued presence of UNDOF in the area to be essential. I therefore recommend that the Security Council extend the mandate of the Force for a further period of six months, until 31 December 2015. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has given its assent to the proposed extension. The Government of Israel also has expressed its agreement.

35. In conclusion, I wish to express my appreciation to the Head of Mission and Force Commander, Major General Purna Chandra Thapa, and the military and civilian personnel serving under his leadership, who continue to perform with efficiency and commitment and under challenging circumstances the important tasks assigned to them by the Security Council. I have full confidence that UNDOF will continue to use its best efforts to carry out its mission.

Annex


LEBANON
SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC
JORDAN
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Line "Alpha 1"
Camp Ziouani
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NEPAL
FRC IRELAND
MP
HQ OGG
UNDOF
DEPLOYMENT
June 2015
OGG observation post
UNDOF position
line "Alpha" or "Bravo"
Inter-battalion boundary
PALESTINE BELT GRID
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